

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF DELAWARE

AVALON DIAZ,)
)
Plaintiff,)
)
v.) Civ. Action No. 11-1071-GMS
)
PLAZA RIVERA,)
)
Defendant.)

MEMORANDUM

The plaintiff, Avalon Diaz (“Diaz”), an inmate at the Howard R. Young Correctional Center, Wilmington, Delaware, filed this lawsuit pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983. (D.I. 2.) He appears *pro se* and was granted permission to proceed *in forma pauperis* pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915. (D.I. 4.) The court now proceeds to review and screen the complaint pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915 and § 1915A.

I. BACKGROUND

Diaz filed this complaint pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 alleging that the defendant Plaza Rivera (“Rivera”), came up behind him, hit him in the head and face, gave him a bloody nose, and hit him in the back and side. As a result, Diaz had blurry vision and blood in his urine for a few days. He seeks compensatory damages. (D.I. 2.)

II. STANDARD OF REVIEW

This court must dismiss, at the earliest practicable time, certain *in forma pauperis* and prisoner actions that are frivolous, malicious, fail to state a claim, or seek monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2) (*in forma pauperis* actions); 28 U.S.C. § 1915A (actions in which prisoner seeks redress from a governmental

defendant); 42 U.S.C. § 1997e (prisoner actions brought with respect to prison conditions). The court must accept all factual allegations in a complaint as true and take them in the light most favorable to a *pro se* plaintiff. *Phillips v. County of Allegheny*, 515 F.3d 224, 229 (3d Cir. 2008); *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 93 (2007). Because Diaz proceeds *pro se*, his pleading is liberally construed and his complaint, “however inartfully pleaded, must be held to less stringent standards than formal pleadings drafted by lawyers.” *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. at 94 (citations omitted).

An action is frivolous if it “lacks an arguable basis either in law or in fact.” *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989). Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i) and § 1915A(b)(1), a court may dismiss a complaint as frivolous if it is “based on an indisputably meritless legal theory” or a “clearly baseless” or “fantastic or delusional” factual scenario. *Neitzke*, 490 at 327-28; *Wilson v. Rackmill*, 878 F.2d 772, 774 (3d Cir. 1989); *see, e.g., Deutsch v. United States*, 67 F.3d 1080, 1091-92 (3d Cir. 1995) (holding frivolous a suit alleging that prison officials took an inmate’s pen and refused to give it back).

The legal standard for dismissing a complaint for failure to state a claim pursuant to § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii) and § 1915A(b)(1) is identical to the legal standard used when ruling on 12(b)(6) motions. *Tourscher v. McCullough*, 184 F.3d 236, 240 (3d Cir. 1999) (applying Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(b)(6) standard to dismissal for failure to state a claim under § 1915(e)(2)(B)). However, before dismissing a complaint or claims for failure to state a claim upon which relief may be granted pursuant to the screening provisions of 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915 and 1915A, the court must grant Diaz leave to amend his complaint unless amendment would be inequitable or futile. *See Grayson v. Mayview State Hosp.*, 293 F.3d 103, 114 (3d Cir. 2002).

A well-pleaded complaint must contain more than mere labels and conclusions. See *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 129 S.Ct. 1937 (2009); *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544 (2007). The assumption of truth is inapplicable to legal conclusions or to “[t]hreadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action supported by mere conclusory statements.” *Iqbal* 129 S.Ct. at 1949. When determining whether dismissal is appropriate, the court conducts a two-part analysis. *Fowler v. UPMC Shadyside*, 578 F.3d 203, 210 (3d Cir. 2009). First, the factual and legal elements of a claim are separated. *Id.* The court must accept all of the complaint’s well-pleaded facts as true, but may disregard any legal conclusions. *Id.* at 210-11. Second, the court must determine whether the facts alleged in the complaint are sufficient to show that Diaz has a “plausible claim for relief.”¹ *Id.* at 211. In other words, the complaint must do more than allege Diaz’s entitlement to relief; rather it must “show” such an entitlement with its facts. *Id.* “[W]here the well-pleaded facts do not permit the court to infer more than a mere possibility of misconduct, the complaint has alleged - but it has not shown - that the pleader is entitled to relief.” *Iqbal*, 129 S.Ct. at 1949 (quoting Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2)).

III. DISCUSSION

When bringing a § 1983 claim, a plaintiff must allege that some person has deprived him of a federal right, and that the person who caused the deprivation acted under color of state law. *West v. Atkins*, 487 U.S. 42, 48 (1988). In addition, a civil rights complaint must state the

¹A claim is facially plausible when its factual content allows the court to draw a reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged. *Iqbal*, 129 S.Ct. at 1949 (quoting *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 570). The plausibility standard “asks for more than a sheer possibility that a defendant has acted unlawfully.” *Id.* “Where a complaint pleads facts that are ‘merely consistent with’ a defendant’s liability, it ‘stops short of the line between possibility and plausibility of ‘entitlement to relief.’” *Id.*

conduct, time, place, and persons responsible for the alleged civil rights violations. *Evancho v. Fisher*, 423 F.3d 347, 353 (3d Cir. 2005) (citing *Boykins v. Ambridge Area Sch. Dist.*, 621 F.2d 75, 80 (3d Cir. 1980); *Hall v. Pennsylvania State Police*, 570 F.2d 86, 89 (3d Cir. 1978)).

The complaint does not indicate when the alleged use of force occurred. Further, the complaint provides the defendant's name and his address at the HRYCI, but the court is unable to discern from the allegations if the defendant is a State actor or an inmate. The complaint, as it now stands, fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted. Therefore, the court will dismiss the complaint pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B).

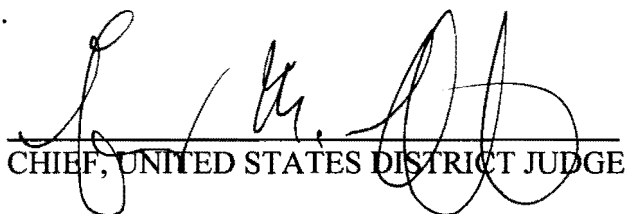
However, since it appears plausible that Diaz may be able to articulate a claim against the defendant (or name alternative defendants), he will be given an opportunity to amend his pleading. See *O'Dell v. United States Gov't*, 256 F. App'x 444 (3d Cir. 2007) (not published) (leave to amend is proper where the plaintiff's claims do not appear "patently meritless and beyond all hope of redemption").

IV. CONCLUSION

For the above reasons, the court will dismiss the complaint for failure to state a claim upon which relief may be granted pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B). Diaz will be given leave to file an amended complaint.

An appropriate order will be entered.

March 12, 2012
Wilmington, Delaware


CHIEF, UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE